

I finally caught him with a good one, right over the left temple
and he backed off and left.

it was a couple of days later
I got even: I fucked his girl.

then I went down and knocked on his door.

well, Alabam, I fucked your woman and now I'm going to kick you all the way to hell!

the poor guy started crying, he put his hands over his face and just cried

I stood there and watched him.

I said, I'm sorry, Alabam.

then I left him there, I went back to my room.

we were all alkies and none of us had jobs, all we had was each other.

even then, my so-called woman was in some bar or somewhere, I hadn't seen her in a couple of days.

I had a bottle of port left.

I uncorked it and took it down to Alabam's room

said, how about a drink, Rebel?

he looked up, stood up, went for two glasses.

CAR WASH

got out, fellow said, "hey!" walked toward me, we shook hands, he slipped me 2 red tabs for free car washes, "find you later,"

I told him, walked on through to waiting area with wife, we sat on outside bench, black fellow with a limp came up, said, "hey, man, how's it going?" I answered, "fine, bro, you makin' it?" "no problem," he said, then walked off to dry down a caddy. "these people know you?" my wife asked. "no." "how come they talk to you?" "they like me, people have always liked me, it's my cross." then our car was finished, fellow flipped his rag toward me, we got up, got to the car, I slipped him a buck, we got in, I started the engine, the foreman walked up, big guy with dark shades, huge guy, he smiled a big one, "good to see you, man!" I smiled back, "thanks, but it's your party, man!" I pulled out into traffic, "they know you," said my wife. "sure," I said, "I've been there."

MY NON-AMBITION AMBITION

my father had little sayings which he mostly emitted during dinner sessions; food made him think of survival:
"succeed or suck eggs ..."
"the early bird gets the worm ..."
"early to bed and early to rise makes a man (etc.) ..."
"anybody who wants to can make it in America ..."
"God takes care of those who (etc.)"

I had no particular idea who he was talking to, and personally I thought of him as a crazed and stupid brute but my mother always interspersed during these sessions: "Henry, you listen to your father."

at that age I didn't have much other choice but as the food went down with the sayings, the appetite and the digestion went along with them.